

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 28528

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EGEN

SUBJECT: BACKGROUND FOR PRESIDENT'S VISIT: FRENCH
ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PRODUCER-CONSUMER DIALOGUE.

NOTE: THIS IS ONE OF SERIES OF MESSAGES SUBMITTED FOR
DEPARTMENT'S USE IN PREPARING PAPERS FOR ECONOMIC
SUMMIT.

1. FRENCH SEE SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF PREPCON II AS
A VICTORY FOR THEIR DIPLOMACY, AND BELIEVE THAT EXPECTED
LAUNCHING OF THE "DIALOGUE" AT THE DECEMBER CONFERENCE
ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION IS A VINDICATION
FOR THEIR POLICY ON PRODUCER-CONSUMER RELATIONS.
GISCARD'S INITIATIVE IN CALLING FOR THE CONFERENCE LAST
OCTOBER, ALTHOUGH BASED AT THE TIME ON A DESIRE TO AVOID
A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN OIL PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS OVER
PRICE, NONETHELESS FELL INTO A FRENCH TRADITION OF
GENEROUS TREATMENT OF THE RAW MATERIALS PRODUCERS, ON
WHOM FRANCE IS HIGHLY DEPENDENT, AND AVOIDANCE OF
CONFRONTATION WITH THE LDCS IN GENERAL. THESE CONTINUE
TO BE CENTRAL ELEMENTS OF FRANCE'S APPROACH TOWARD THE
COMING DIALOGUE.

2. THE FRENCH BELIEVE THAT U. S. POLICIES IN THIS RE-
SPECT HAVE EVOLVED, AND ARE NOW MUCH CLOSER TO THEIR
OWN. THEY RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR CONTRIBUTION
IN MAKING A RESUMPTION OF THE DIALOGUE POSSIBLE, BUT
WILL BE WATCHING US CLOSELY (AND APPREHENSIVELY) TO SEE
THE EXTENT TO WHICH OUR CHANGED POLICY CAN HOLD UP IN
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SPECIFIC NEGOTIATIONS.

3. FRENCH GOALS IN THE DIALOGUE ARE (1) TO MAINTAIN THE APPEARANCE OF FRENCH LEADERSHIP AND INITIATIVE AS THE DIALOGUE MOVES FORWARD (BUT AVOIDING OVER-IDENTIFICATION IN THE EVENT THAT IT FAILS), (2) MAINTAIN GOOD CREDENTIALS WITH BOTH PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS, BUT PARTICULARLY THE FORMER, INCLUDING THE OFFERING OF GOOD OFFICES ON OCCASION, AND (3) TO SEE TO IT THAT ANY TRANSFER OF RESOURCES (WHICH THEY BELIEVE INEVITABLE) IS AS LIMITED AS POSSIBLE AND DOES NOT HARM FRANCE'S COMPETITIVE POSITION VIS-A-VIS THE OTHER INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES.

4. THESE GOALS CLEARLY WILL CONFLICT ON OCCASION WITH OUR OWN. MOREOVER, IN PURSUING THESE GOALS, THE FRENCH ARE LIKELY TO FOLLOW DIFFERENT TACTICS FROM OUR OWN. THEY MAY, FOR EXAMPLE, BE MORE PREPARED THAN WE TO ACCEPT OIL (OR OTHER RAW MATERIAL) PRICE INDEXATION. ALSO, THEIR BENT FOR "MARKET ORGANIZATION" WILL LEAD THEM TO PUSH FOR COMMODITY AGREEMENTS OR SIMILAR MECHANISMS AS THE INSTRUMENTS FOR TRANSFER, RATHER THAN THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS WHICH WE FAVOR.

5. WE CAN CONSEQUENTLY EXPECT PERIODIC DIFFERENCES OF OPINION WITH THE FRENCH ON THE OBJECTIVES AND TACTICS OF THE DIALOGUE, WHICH MAY BE DISRUPTIVE TO OUR EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRY SOLIDARITY. THE FRENCH, HOWEVER, WILL NOT BE INDEPENDENT ACTORS AND WILL BE CONSTRAINED BY THE NEED FOR EC AGREEMENT ON POSITIONS. THIS FACT, COUPLED WITH EXTENSIVE OECD CONSULTATIONS, SHOULD MAKE OUR DIFFICULTIES WITH FRANCE MORE MANAGEABLE.

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